

RAAUM'S BIG HORN RANCH GAME FARM DECISION DOCUMENT

December 16, 1998

Game Farm Application and MEPA Review

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) received an application for an expansion to Raaum's Big Horn Ranch Game Farm on September 16, 1998. On October 5, 1998, FWP accepted the original application as complete which initiated a 120-day review and decision period per laws governing game farms.

The applicants expansion proposal is to raise white-tailed and mule deer for the purpose of selling and/or hunting the excess stock. Up to 20 mule deer (10 male and 10 female) and 10 white-tailed deer (5 male and 5 female) will be raised within two fenced areas in the existing 115 acre game farm. The mule and white-tailed deer are in addition to the existing game farm license which allows for up to 60 elk in this same 115 acres. The proposed project is located approximately 5 miles south of Culbertson, Montana.

A draft Environmental Analysis (EA) on the proposal was prepared pursuant to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the game farm statute and distributed for public review on November 6, 1998. The draft EA identified no significant impacts that could not be mitigated.

The Department has received no public comments on the draft EA. The Department has issued a Final EA that determined the proposed project will create no significant impacts on the human environment and determined, therefore, that an environmental impact statement was not required.

Proposed Decision

Based upon our review of the EA, the game farm license application file and the information noted below, the FWP has determined that a license to expand the operations of the game farm in question will be issued.

Licensee must be in compliance with all game farm statutes, rules and regulations of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parts and Department of Livestock. Current regulations are attached for the applicant's information, but it is the licensee's responsibility to keep up with any changes in the laws or regulations. The Licensee must also comply with the stipulations listed below.

With most game farms, there is the concern of disease transmission to wild populations and also genetic 'pollution' should wild and captive animals interbreed. Wild animals such as native elk, black bears, mountain lions and coyotes can be attracted to game farms due to the availability of food and potential breeding opportunities. Responsible management and

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adherence to FWP stipulations and regulations should reduce the risk of contact between wild and game farm animals to an acceptable level.

REQUIRED STIPULATIONS

The following stipulations are imposed by FWP for the Raaum Big Horn Ranch game farm and are designed to mitigate significant impacts identified in the EA to below the level of significance:

- (1) *Report ingress of any wild game animals or egress of domestic elk, white-tailed deer, or mule deer to the Montana FWP immediately. The report must contain the probable reason why or how ingress/egress occurred.*
- (2) *Maintain a reasonable stocking rate. The potential for 90 animals on 115 acres will damage soil and vegetation resources. Supplemental forage will be necessary for all species included if stocked at that rate.*
- (3) *The licensee must immediately comply with any disease control, surveillance, and/or testing requirements issued by the state veterinarian.*
- (4) *Adhere to recommendations and stipulations in Raaum Big Horn Ranch Decision Document dated February 4, 1998.*

The stipulations listed above are imposed to mitigate potentially significant risk to wildlife posed by the proposed game farm from concerns related to diseases and fence integrity from snow drifting and rainstorm erosion. Risk to wildlife from contact between game farm animals and wild game is potentially significant due to the site being located in an area currently utilized by wild game. Information provided by the stipulations would also help both the applicant and FWP to address ingress and egress incidents and to minimize contact between wild and domestic animals. These stipulations, in addition to fencing requirements, are expected to reduce the risk to wildlife to below significant.

Tom Hinz
Regional Supervisor

Date

Please sign and return the original to FWP to indicate your concurrence with the license stipulations listed above. A copy of the signed decision will be provided to you for your records.

Mail to: Judy Elletson, MFWP Region Six, Route 1 - 4210, Glasgow, MT 59230.

Terril Raaum

Date